





# Executive Summary

## REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: CHARTING A PATH FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

The Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) is a problem-solving guidance document that directly responds to what we've learned about Southern California's challenges through the annual State of the Region report card. It responds to SCAG's Regional Council directive in the 2002 Strategic Plan to develop a holistic, strategic plan for defining and solving our inter-related housing, traffic, water, air quality, and other regional challenges. Through extensive outreach and input from the RCP Task Force, SCAG's policy committees, subregions, local governments and other key stakeholders, the RCP is a collaborative effort to address our region's challenges and set a path forward.

The RCP sets a path forward in two key ways. First, it ties together SCAG's role in transportation, land use, and air quality planning and demonstrates why we need to do more than we're doing today. For example, while the RCP is based on the growth management framework of the Compass Blueprint, it further promotes environmental policies that help to "green" the region and lay the groundwork for a more robust 2012

update of the Regional Transportation Plan. Second, it recommends key roles and responsibilities for public and private sector stakeholders and invites them to implement reasonable policies that are within their control.

The result is a proactive, unconstrained, big-picture advisory plan that envisions what a livable, sustainable, successful region could look like and challenges us to tackle difficult issues. The RCP describes what could happen if current trends continue, defines a vision for a healthier region, and recommends an Action Plan that could get us there by 2035. By balancing resource conservation, economic vitality, and quality of life, it lays out a long-term planning framework that shows how we can respond to growth and infrastructure challenges in a comprehensive way.

Of course, there are many ways to address the region's challenges. As such, while the RCP recommends more integrated resource planning, *it does not mandate it*. Rather, local governments are asked to consider this Plan's recommendations in General Plan updates, municipal code amendments, design guidelines, incentive programs and other actions. The key is to begin talking about what the challenges are, define success, and implement solutions.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### RCP CHAPTERS

The RCP features nine chapters that focus on specific areas of planning or resource management:

- ▶ Land Use and Housing
- ▶ Open Space and Habitat
- ▶ Water
- ▶ Energy
- ▶ Air Quality
- ▶ Solid Waste
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Security and Emergency Preparedness
- ▶ Economy

## *The RCP is a problem-solving guidance document that*

The RCP is being developed to:

- Respond to the SCAG Regional Council's direction to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the region's economic, social and environmental future and emphasizes the interdependence of nine resource areas (see sidebar).
- Inform local, subregional, and county economic and resource plans that are often limited by geography or scope. For example, a county-wide resource plan for open space may fail to recognize the habitat value of linking to adjacent county open space plans.
- Help meet federal transportation planning requirements that call for more integrated resource planning, particularly more integration of environmental concerns into transportation plans through expanded consultation.
- Offer recommendations to local governments from a regional, comprehensive perspective for consideration into the development of local General Plans and the design and review of major development through the region's Intergovernmental Review process.
- Provide a regional response and strategy for meeting climate change mandates that call for reductions in greenhouse gases.
- Offer a comprehensive, integrated policy plan that helps position Southern California to get its fair share of revenue

from federal and state funding programs, such as the traffic, housing, water, and park infrastructure bonds approved in 2006.

- Help stakeholders make the most of their limited resources by highlighting priority policies for future implementation that maximize benefits both locally and regionally.

Ultimately, the RCP sets the stage for regional dialogue and begins a process to measure our performance. Success depends on the region's ability to agree on our challenges, evaluate policy options, and seek consensus. As the council of governments for Southern California, SCAG is uniquely positioned to work with its subregions and local governments membership to take a leadership role in sustainability planning to meet our needs of today without undermining our ability to do so in the future. As the region's metropolitan planning organization, SCAG can help prioritize federal and state funds for programs that support the RCP's vision and outcomes.

To that end, SCAG proposes to update the RCP on a regular basis in concert with the Regional Transportation Plan to reflect changes in legislation, technology, policy, and other variables.

### ASSESSING OUR CHALLENGES

Southern California is witnessing historic change at the global, national, and regional level. As our world continues to change

in sometimes dramatic ways, Southern California is increasingly faced with tougher policy choices that will shape our region for generations to come:

- As we add over seven million more residents to our region by 2035, our ability to coordinate growth and infrastructure will determine how we consume our finite resources, whether it's open space, water, or even roadway capacity. Furthermore, policy initiatives like the Southwest Alliance can be used to coordinate growth and infrastructure planning with our partners in Kern County, San Diego County, and even Mexico.
- Making a real dent in traffic congestion is getting tougher and more expensive. Our region must explore new initiatives that can reverse decades of worsening mobility and make tomorrow's commute better than today. If we don't develop new initiatives to address how people and freight move, average freeway speeds will slow to 28 mph while the economic, environmental, and public health costs of congestion will continue to rise.
- After decades of steady progress, our air quality improvements have leveled off as growth has begun to offset the technological advancements that have served us well until now. Today, we face an air quality crisis, with more than 5,000 premature deaths from fine particulate matter. We must respond to more stringent air quality standards for  $PM_{2.5}$  (particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter) and even unregulated smaller pollutants called nanoparticles by reducing our reliance on diesel and other petroleum-based, combustion engines.
- The future of our energy supply is becoming uncertain. We are increasingly dependent on imported petroleum, natural gas, and coal, which account for 85 percent of our energy use. As we question the long term viability of a petroleum-based energy future, we must explore non-combustion-based energy sources.
- Our water supplies are increasingly threatened by pollution, and growth is often limited by whether there's adequate supply. The quality of our surface and groundwater supplies is equally important and must be protected through better management practices.
- Our economy continues to become more service- and technology-oriented, with manufacturing outsourced to other regions and other countries. Today, the freight movement and logistics industries fuel much of our local economy. Over time, our region needs to find a balance that promotes regional economic sustainability through promotion of local industries while recognizing its important link to the global economy.
- We have to rethink our current waste management approaches and realize that waste is the result of the inefficient use of our limited, natural resources. Our region generates over 80 million tons of trash each year. Burying the problem in landfills does not make it go



## THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

If projected regional, national, and international changes continue to unfold, our region will go through profound changes. There are potentially troubling consequences if we fail to act now:

**Land Use and Housing:** Lack of new housing in existing neighborhoods could result in increased land consumption in fringe areas.

**Transportation:** As roadways get more congested, traffic speeds could drop to an average of 28 miles per hour during rush hour.

**Solid Waste:** Exporting waste to desert areas and beyond increases the economic and environmental costs of waste management.

## The RCP is a structured policy framework that links broad

away. We need to address this issue by reducing waste, reusing materials, recycling, and developing alternative technologies.

In addition, forces on the national and international scale are impacting our region:

- **Climate change.** The body of scientific evidence shows that our global climate is heating up at unprecedented rates that threaten life as we know it. The vast Southern California region has contributed to the highest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions levels in recorded history. This threatens to impact all aspects of our communities, whether it's reduced water supplies, habitat loss, increased air pollution, or public health impacts. The secondary effects of climate change are almost as troubling; for example, hotter cities need more cooling, which increases power plant usage that contributes further to the vicious cycle of greenhouse gases.
- **Energy uncertainty.** As the peak of the world's petroleum production rate is reached, there could be profound consequences to our region's economy. Southern California's transportation, agricultural and industrial systems are highly dependent on inexpensive oil. Any production decline and resulting price increases will have negative implications for the global and regional economy; the severity will depend on the rate of production decline and the linked increases in prices and our ability to find alternatives for petroleum.

- **Global economy.** If Southern California were a country, we'd be the 15th largest economy in the world. In this globalized economy, our region is increasingly susceptible to outside influences like international economic downturns that pose further challenges.

These challenges call for action, because the consequences of inaction are potentially devastating (see the "The Consequences of Inaction" sidebar). This need for action is all the more urgent because all of these issues are tightly linked. For example, failure to address land use and housing issues have direct and indirect impacts on air quality and public health.

## FORMING A VISION AND IMPLEMENTING AN ACTION PLAN

The RCP is a structured policy framework that links broad principles to an action plan that moves the region towards balanced goals. The following vision statement and guiding principles are based on the region's adopted Compass Growth Vision Principles for Sustaining a Livable Region. These statements further articulate how the RCP can promote and sustain the region's mobility, livability, and prosperity for future generations.



# *principles to an action plan that moves us forward.*

2008

**DRAFT**

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## **RCP Vision**

*To foster a Southern California region that addresses future needs while recognizing the interrelationship between economic prosperity, natural resource sustainability, and quality of life. Through measured performance and tangible outcomes, the RCP serves as both an action plan for implementation of short-term strategies and a call to action for strategic, long-term initiatives that are guided by the following Guiding Principles for sustaining a livable region.*

## **RCP Guiding Principles**

*Improve mobility for all residents. Improve the efficiency of the transportation system by strategically adding new travel choices to enhance system connectivity in concert with land use decisions and environmental objectives.*

*Foster livability in all communities. Foster safe, healthy, walkable communities with diverse services, strong civic participation, affordable housing and equal distribution of environmental benefits.*

*Enable prosperity for all people. Promote economic vitality and new economies by providing housing, education, and job training opportunities for all people.*

*Promote sustainability for future generations. Promote a region where quality of life and economic prosperity for future generations are supported by the sustainable use of natural resources.*

The RCP looks at nine key areas of public policy that are linked closely to these guiding principles. Goals, Outcomes, and

Action Plans for each chapter are identified that are consistent with the RCP's Vision and Guiding Principles (see "How to Use This Document" on page 10 for more information).

## **SETTING PRIORITIES**

Everything is connected. Our region functions as a complex interconnection of environmental, social, cultural, economic, and other systems. Ignoring problems in one area can have ripple effects in another. For example, a warming planet can have profound implications for water supply, energy, and other resource areas that depend on a stable climate. Further, problems in one city can spill over onto adjoining cities, reminding us that we are connected in visible and not-so-visible ways.

The RCP promotes policies that are win-win propositions and produce direct and indirect benefits in multiple policy areas. To that end, this document lays out what other benefits could be realized if each chapter's goals are met. Policies could provide benefits in any of the nine resource areas of the Plan, as well as address other policy objectives, like promoting environmental justice principles, improving public health, and addressing climate change.



## THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

**Energy:** Estimates indicate up to 100 more days per year with temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit in Los Angeles

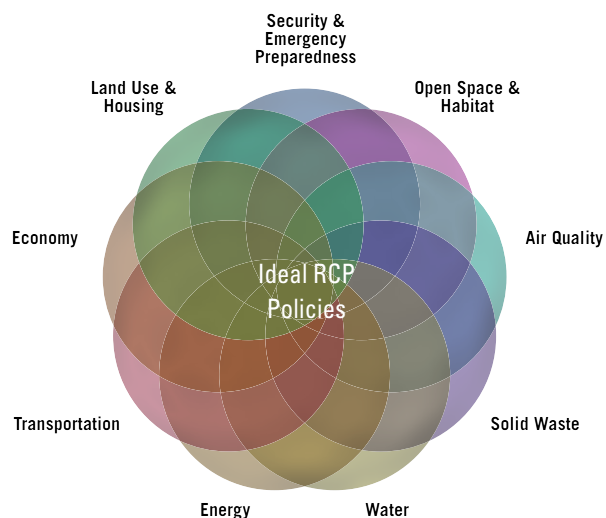
Higher temperatures and lower snow pack due to global warming could reduce hydropower generation, reducing California's in-state power production by 5 percent.

**Air Quality:** With a potential 3 to 10.5 degree rise in temperature due to climate change, extremely hot days could double to 72 per year.

Higher temperatures could hinder our air quality goals resulting in 85 percent more days conducive to ozone formation in the Los Angeles area.

## The RCP's priority policies will have the greatest

**FIGURE 1.1**  
**RCP Promotes Multiple Benefits**



Because there is no single approach that can solve our region's array of challenges, our region is faced with many policy options that should be evaluated before decisions are made. However, identifying priority policies that should be the focus of the region's short-term game plan is critical.

There are a variety of performance measures that can be used to rank policy options, such as cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit ratio, and environmental benefits. The RCP looks at the body of recommended policies and highlights those that can produce the most benefits across resource areas. In doing so, the RCP provides a framework for local decision-making that

helps advance those policies that provide multiple benefits "for the price of one."

Based on the input from the public outreach on the Draft Plan, the RCP's priority policies will be those that have the greatest potential for direct and indirect benefits over multiple resource areas. In addition, priorities will also have the potential to address other policy objectives, including public health and climate change concerns.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As an advisory document, the RCP identifies potential policies that the public and private sector should consider in its planning and daily operations. The RCP reaffirms the institutional roles that SCAG, local governments, resource organizations, and the private sector have in resource planning and programs. To that end, the RCP recommends the following roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders:

- **SCAG.** As a council of governments, SCAG can take a leadership role by working with its member jurisdictions to promote sound planning policies through guidance, financial incentives, and other means. The RCP continues an ongoing dialogue with 187 local governments to develop consensus about how Southern California thinks globally and regionally and acts locally. In its role as a metropolitan planning organization, SCAG can

also help advance integrated policies through its funding decisions.

- **Local governments.** Local jurisdictions have the land use authority to promote balanced growth and other local initiatives that promote holistic planning. In their capacity as major employers, cities also can set an example in their communities by adopting proactive policies that reduce waste, promote energy efficiency, and address other goals.
- **Transportation commissions.** With their role in planning and programming transportation projects, commissions can modify their criteria to help promote integrated planning objectives. For example, linking local land use decisions with transportation funding priorities is a key opportunity to increase transit ridership. Commissions can also look at other environmental and economic criteria to provide a more balanced view of the benefits of their plans, programs, and projects.
- **Resource agencies and conservation groups.** These organizations work every day to promote better resource management, economic development, and other social and environmental policies and programs. The RCP offers these organizations the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities through a more regional approach.

- **Private sector.** Through voluntary changes in their practices, businesses can take a proactive role in addressing the goals of the region. Whether it's reducing consumer waste associated with product packaging or promoting greener building practices in new development, the private sector has a key role in promoting programs that are consistent with the RCP.
- **The public.** The long-term well-being of our region ultimately serves the needs of all of us, our children, and future generations. Our decision-makers need to know that solving our environmental, economic, and quality of life problems is something worth working for. The public can play a key role in addressing the goals of the region through their votes and consumer habits.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF RCP TO COMPASS BLUEPRINT AND THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

This integrated Plan is closely tied to both SCAG's Compass Blueprint and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). On one hand, the RCP complements the Compass Blueprint and the 2008 RTP. For example, it expands on federal SAFETEA-LU requirements that call for improved coordination and mitigation of transportation plans that reinforce mitigation measures needed to address the RTP's environmental impacts.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

*Open Space and Habitat:* Invasive plants and weeds compete with native plants, potentially wiping out a number of endangered species.

60 to 80 percent of existing plant populations could be phased out, resulting in less biodiversity.

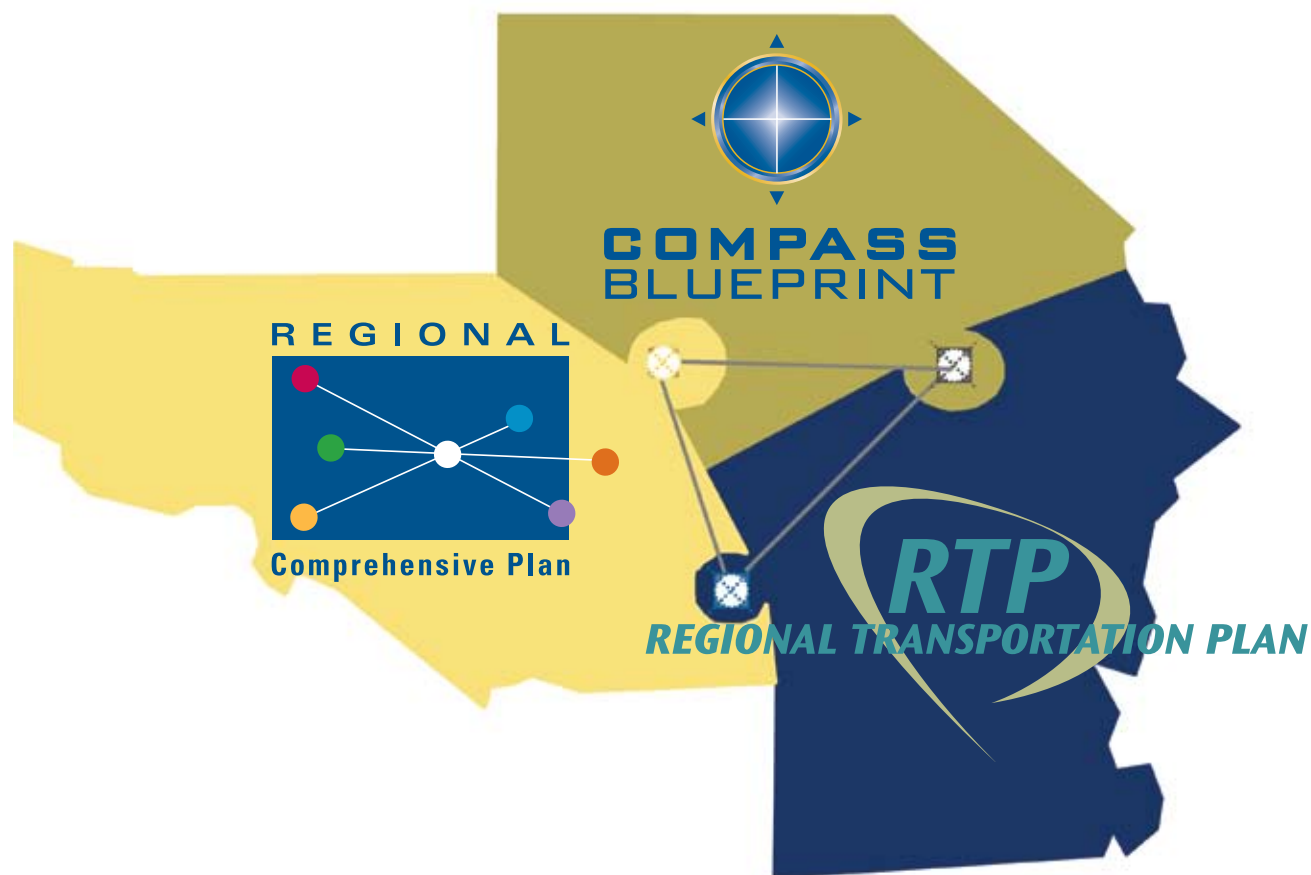
*Economy:* Transportation, agricultural and industrial systems depend on inexpensive oil; decline in petroleum production without alternative energy sources will result in severe price increases and impacts to our economy.

Global warming will reduce the quality and quantity of certain agricultural products that help drive the California economy.

## The RCP builds on the Compass Blueprint framework

FIGURE 1.2

Three Interrelated Plans



However, the RCP further advocates for even bolder policies that attempt to achieve a healthier, more sustainable region.

On the other hand, the RCP sets the direction for how both programs can evolve in the future. For example, while the RCP builds on the growth management framework of the Compass Blueprint, it promotes natural resource policies that help “green” the region as we move toward more sustainable development. It also calls for improved integration of the Compass Blueprint into the RTP by suggesting that future transportation plans better promote transit projects that can serve the Compass Blueprint focus areas that have or are anticipated to see population and job growth. Similarly, the RCP incorporates the recommendations from the pending 2008 RTP and also clarifies the need for further action in the future to achieve this Plan’s goals.

## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The RCP is laid out much like a General Plan and organizes recommended policies into nine chapters. The highlight of each chapter is the regional strategy that addresses the RCP’s vision for that resource area. As such, each chapter includes three levels of recommendations for the region:

- **Goals.** Each goal will help define how sustainability is defined for that resource area.
- **Outcomes.** These focus on quantitative targets that define progress toward meeting the RCP’s Goals. Where

possible, they are clearly defined (e.g., a 20 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2007 levels), capable of being monitored with existing or reasonably foreseeable resources, and have a strong link to sustainability goals.

- **Action Plan.** This critical part of the RCP lays out a comprehensive implementation strategy that recommends how the region can systematically move to meet the RCP’s quantitative Outcomes and achieve its Goals, Guiding Principles, and Vision. Each Action Plan contains:

- ▶ **Constrained Policies.** This includes a series of recommended near-term, feasible policies that stakeholders should consider for implementation. For example, the RCP calls on SCAG to adopt policies that reflect its role as a planning agency, council of governments, and metropolitan planning organization.

The RCP also recommends potential policies for consideration by local governments and other key stakeholders. Clear policies will improve the Intergovernmental Review (IGR) process and help SCAG and local governments assess the consistency of local projects to the RCP. SCAG uses the IGR process to offer comments to local governments on how regional issues and concerns should be addressed by both local projects and citywide policies.



## THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

**Water:** Increased temperatures would result in earlier annual snow melt and increased rainfall in the mountains, leading to increased flood risks along major streams and rivers throughout the region.

Sierra Nevada spring snow pack could reduce by as much as 30 percent—a primary source of water for Southern California.

Sea levels could rise from 1 to 3 feet by 2100. The resulting influx of saltwater could threaten the quality and reliability of major fresh water supplies.

- ▶ **Strategic Initiatives.** This encompasses longer-term strategies that require significant effort to implement but are necessary to achieve the RCP's desired Goals and Outcomes. For example, identifying technological breakthroughs that can reduce air pollution from the transportation sector requires both commitment and time. Most of these initiatives are not constrained and will require political will, enabling legislation, new funding sources, and other key developments to become a reality. In most cases, this tier of strategies is the key to achieving the region's sustainability Goals and Outcomes.

As shown in the following figure, each Action Plan is presented in a tabular format that provides several pieces of information. Each table outlines policies and initiatives that are sorted by the potential implementing entity and describes:

- ▶ **Type of Policy or Initiative.** The tables organize policies and initiatives into three categories:
  - ▶ **IGR/Best Practices** refer to good ideas that should be considered for both General Plan updates and for inclusion in development projects. SCAG would rely on these measures to evaluate and

comment on local projects and plans through its Intergovernmental Review (IGR) process.

- ▶ **Legislation** refers to areas that require legislative or regulatory reform.
- ▶ **Coordination** involves two or more entities working together to move ideas into action. In such cases, SCAG is often considering taking a leadership role to promote partnerships that break through historical barriers and move initiatives forward.
- ▶ **Potential for Direct and Indirect Benefits.** This summarizes whether a policy could provide direct and indirect benefits for other resources areas. For example, a policy calling for congestion pricing of roadways could produce air quality benefits as well. To reinforce the theme of multiple benefits, each chapter highlights some key ways in which its policies can benefit other resource areas. The **Appendix** to the RCP includes more discussion of these multiple benefits.
- ▶ **Potential for Other Benefits.** The potential for benefits to public health and climate change.



**FIGURE 1.3**  
**Action Plan Layout**

Identifies potential to address other policy objectives

Implementing this policy could directly or indirectly improve open space

Identifies potential benefits in the other eight resource chapters of the RCP

Indicates whether the table identifies Constrained Policies or Strategic Initiatives

### ENERGY ACTION PLAN

IGR/Best Practices	Legislation	Coordination	Constrained Policies	Potential for Direct/Indirect Benefits								Other Benefits	
				Land Use	Transportation	Air Quality	Water	Open Space	Economy	Security	Solid Waste	Public Health	Climate Change
SCAG Policies (SCAG policies shall be subject to consideration for future Overall Work Plans)													
		X	EN-1. SCAG shall continue to work with the State to develop approaches for evaluating environmental impacts within the Compass Blueprint program, particularly energy, air quality, water, and open space and habitat.	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
X			EN-2. SCAG shall continue to develop energy efficiency and green building guidance to provide direction on specific approaches and models and to specify levels of performance for regionally significant projects to be consistent with regional plans.	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
	X		EN-3. SCAG shall encourage credits for clean post recycle conversion technologies to produce energy or for technologies that offset energy use or emissions.		X	X			X		X	X	X
Local Government Policies													
X			EN-4. Developers should incorporate and local governments should include the following land use principles that use resources efficiently, eliminate pollution and significantly reduce waste into their projects, zoning codes and other implementation mechanisms: • Mixed-use residential and commercial development that is connected with public transportation and utilizes existing infrastructure. • Land use and planning strategies to increase biking and walking trips.	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Through the Intergovernmental Review (IGR) process, SCAG will use these Policies as the basis for its comments on regionally-significant projects.

These policies or initiatives rely on changes to existing legislation or regulation.

These potential areas for SCAG leadership that rely on partnerships with public and/or private sector stakeholders.

EN-1 stands for Energy Constrained Policy 1.  
EN-1S stands for Energy Strategic Initiative 1.

RCP policies and initiatives are sorted by potential implementing entity (e.g., SCAG, local governments and/or developers, State of federal government)